

CONGRESS shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, RATIFIED DEC. 15, 1791

## EDITORIALS

# Lead poisoning at Verdese Carter Park

**F**INALLY, someone is planning to do something about the dangerous lead contamination at East Oakland's Verdese Carter Park.

Several federal and county agencies have released a plan to test area residents for lead poisoning and their homes for contamination. Residents with unsafe levels of lead in their blood will receive county grants to clean up their houses and yards.

The plan is an important first step toward resolving this urban nightmare. But the city of Oakland's lackadaisical neglect of this pressing problem is still cause for alarm.

The troubles with the park, constructed on a former battery factory site, began even before it opened in 1978. In fact, it was closed before it was officially opened because of concentrations of lead at 96 times the level considered safe. Lead poisoning can cause learning disabilities and other serious health problems.

The city removed 12 inches of soil, replaced it with topsoil and opened the park.

Twelve years later, after neighbors complained about the erosion of playground equipment, the soil was tested again and unsafe lead levels were found again. Instead

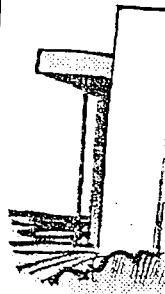
following the advice of consultants who recommended removing sand in the sand lot and excavating, the city removed the equipment and fenced off the sand lot. Inexplicably, the city left two openings in the fence.

It was only a matter of time before children started playing in the sand lot again. In 1993, when residents noticed a yellowish-white substance oozing through the cracks on the basketball court, they appealed to the city again. They didn't get any help until the African-American Development Association and the Concerned Citizens of Elmhurst organized a protest and contacted federal agencies.

When the Environmental Protection Agency tested the soil in the surrounding neighborhood, initial tests detected extremely high levels of lead. One yard registered levels 50 times higher than those considered safe. Nine children at Cox elementary school across the street from the park also had blood levels well above the safe level.

For its part, the city has closed the park. It is scheduled to be reopened in November after an extensive cleanup. Too bad it's 15

Finally, someone is  
planning to do something,  
15 years late.



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IT IS difficult person to find for Clinton's decision diplomatic relations. Accordingly, there's wrong with, and by, re-establishing with Taiwan, China, Korea, Iraq or Somalia.

First, none of done anything even mutual terror we mese rained on 10 years of incessant

